LEVEL ONE

NEWS FROM NATIVE CALIFORNIA.
SPECIAL REPORT

SHARING A DESERT HOME

Life on the Colorado River Indian Reservation

Poston, Arizona
1942-1945

PROCESSED
DEC 10 2001
GTU LIBRARY

Ruth Y. Okimoto, Ph.D.
California Civil Liberties Public Education Program

A special report of News from Native California

NEWS FROM NATIVE CALIFORNIA

PUBLISHER:
Malcolm Margolin

FOUNDERS:
Malcolm Margolin, David W. Peri, Vera Mae Fredrickson

MANAGING EDITOR:
Margaret Dubin

SPECIAL REPORT PROJECT MANAGER:
Patricia Wakida

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS:
Paul Apodaca, Brian Bibby, Marina Drummer, L. Frank, Jeannine Gendar, Leanne Hinton, Julian Lang, Frank LaPena, Kathy Lewis, Beverly R. Ortiz, Allogan Slagle, Darryl Wilson, Linda Yamane

DESIGN, TYPESETTING, PRODUCTION:
Margaret Dubin

SUBSCRIPTIONS & PROMOTION:
Kimberly Hogeland

PRINTING:
Paul Baker Printing, Sacramento

News from Native California is owned by Clapperstick Institute, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit educational corporation. It is published quarterly out of the offices of Heyday Books.
Publication address:
2054 University Ave., #400, Berkeley, CA 94704.
Phone: (510) 549-2802.
Fax: (510) 549-1889.
Mail Address:
Box 9145, Berkeley, CA 94709.
Periodical postage paid at Berkeley, CA.
Internet address:
www.heydaybooks.com/news

Subscription rates $19.00 per year. Single copies $4.95. Foreign rates $34/one year.

Copyright © 2001 by *News from Native California* except where otherwise noted. All rights reserved. Reproduction or use, without written permission, of editorial or pictorial content in any manner is prohibited.

The staff welcomes unsolicited manuscripts but cannot be responsible for their loss or damage.

Opinions expressed in articles and columns are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the editors or publisher.

Postmaster: Send address changes to *News from Native California*, P.O. Box 9145, Berkeley, CA 94709.

ISSN 10405437 USPS 002704

PUBLISHER'S NOTES

A little more than a year ago, Ruth Okimoto showed up at our Berkeley offices to discuss an unusual project. As a youngster she had been incarcerated, along with nearly 20,000 other Japanese Americans, at Poston, a camp set up during World War II on the Colorado River Indian Reservation on the border of California and Arizona. She wanted to research and create a publication that would explore the links between the Japanese Americans and the Indian experiences there.

She approached us for obvious reasons. Through our quarterly magazine, *News from Native California*, and our book publishing imprint, Heyday Books, we have long been publishing material about California Indian history and culture. In the last couple of years, we have also been publishing books on Japanese American art, literature, and history. We were uniquely suited for this project. Would we be interested in working with her? The answer, of course, was a resounding "yes," and the publication before you is the result of that collaboration.
I am well aware that we all live in a very busy world, but please do give this report your full attention for a while. It is an important piece of Indian history, of Japanese American history, indeed of American history. It reminds us of an atmosphere of racial prejudice that resulted in the prolonged oppression of native people and the uprooting of 120,000 Japanese Americans whose only crime was their ethnic background. It describes two utterly distinct cultures sharing a home under the heavy hand of a government policy meant to control, repress, and assimilate. And, in the end, it celebrates the capacity of people to overcome hardship and alienation, pain and personal tragedy.

We are proud to present this publication as a special report of *News from Native California*, and we are sending it free to all our subscribers. Further copies will be distributed to members of the Japanese American community, to schools on or near the Colorado River Indian reservation, and to educators through the Stanford Program on International and Cross-Cultural Education (SPICE).

Our deepest thanks to Ruth Okimoto for involving us in this heartfelt and worthwhile project.

—Malcolm Margolin

"Schooled in the U.S.A." by Ruth Y. Okimoto, 1998. Color and graphite pencils with acrylics. Adapted from a camp photo of the third-grade class in Poston Camp III, 1945.

CONTENTS

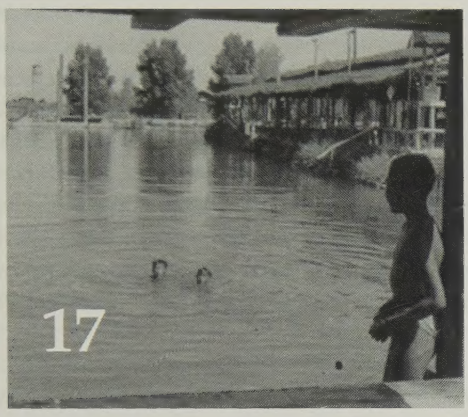
4 Acknowledgments

5 Introduction

6 Establishment of the Poston Camp

10 Sharing a Desert Home

15 Ordinance No. 5



16 Colonization of Poston Camp II: September 1, 1945

18 Poston Heritage/The Remains of Poston

20 Post-War Relationship

23 Author's Note

25 Appendix A: America's Concentration Camps

26 Appendix B: Poston Memorial Monument

27 Appendix C: Eisenhower's Letter

28 Endnotes

31 References

On the front cover:
"Poston 1942-1945" by Kate Shaw and Ruth Y. Okimoto, 2000. Graphic and color pencil on paper. Background photo of Poston Relocation Center taken from a water tower. WRA 1967.014, Group 10, Vol. 1, Sect A. WRA no. A-191. The Bancroft Library, University of California.

On the back cover:
"Sharing a Desert Home," Ruth Y. Okimoto, 2000. Graphic and color pencil, pastel and acrylic. 33 1/2" x 45 1/2."

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Passing the half-century mark in life gives one the luxury of looking back on one's childhood with more objectivity and appreciation for what transpired many years ago. Along with thousands of other young Japanese American children and their families living on the West Coast, I lived for three years in Poston, Arizona, one of America's 10 concentration camps where Japanese Americans were incarcerated during World War II. As a child, I was aware of the desert environment of the Colorado River Indian Reservation (CRIR) where Poston was situated. For years thereafter, I often wondered about the American Indians who lived on the reservation.

The opportunity to research the links and relationships between the Japanese American detainees and the Colorado River Indian Tribes (CRIT) fulfilled a lifelong curiosity. It was an incredible experience. I am especially indebted to the California Civil Liberties Public Education Program (CCLPEP), which provided the resources to conduct my research and to publish this special edition to the *News from Native California*. In addition to the CCLPEP grant, many individuals gave of their time to help me piece together the story of Poston. Malcolm Margolin, Publisher and Co-Editor, Heyday Books, spent hours editing and putting some semblance of order into a rambling first draft. Patricia Wakida, Project Manager, read the drafts, and spent hours with me by phone and in person to keep my project on time and in line with publication guidelines. Thanks also to Julianna Fleming, who edited the draft for clarity and page constraints, and to Margaret Dubin, managing editor of *News from Native California*, for overseeing the final editing process.

A special thanks to Gary Mukai, Director, Stanford Program on International and Cross-Cultural Education (SPICE), who encouraged me to pursue the research and read my draft with care and thoughtful feedback. Also, thanks to Amelia Flores, Librarian/Archive Director of the CRIT Library and Archives, for providing access to the CRIT archives, helping to contact potential CRIT interviewees, and providing other support during my visits to the CRIR. Paul Wormser, Archivist at the National Archives Pacific Region, Laguna Niguel, CA, searched the archives for questions I had and found the critical box that contained the documents I was seeking. Stephen Holsapple provided technical advice and assistance with my recording equipment.

Interviews added a human dimension to the Poston story. Allen Anspach, Ted Kobata, James and Betty Kobata, Orlando Laffoon (Mohave), Paul and Florence Nagano, Jim Namba, Sid and Jean Urase, Bill Wake, Lloyd Wake, and Hopi "colonists" Ron Moore, Maxine Morris, and Estelle Yava—who were young children at the time they moved to Poston Camp II during the colonization program—all gave graciously of their time. Also, thanks to Don Estes for providing photographs and taking a deep interest in this project. Richard Babe Karasawa read my draft and provided feedback. Dr. Raoul Roko, who studied the internment history as a high school student in the Republic of Benin (Africa), provided an "outsider's view" as he read my draft. I appreciated the hours of conversation we had about internment, and Poston in particular.

My grateful thanks to all the above. As always, thanks to Marvin Lipofsky and my family for their unending support and encouragement.

—R. Y. Okimoto, July 2001

INTRODUCTION

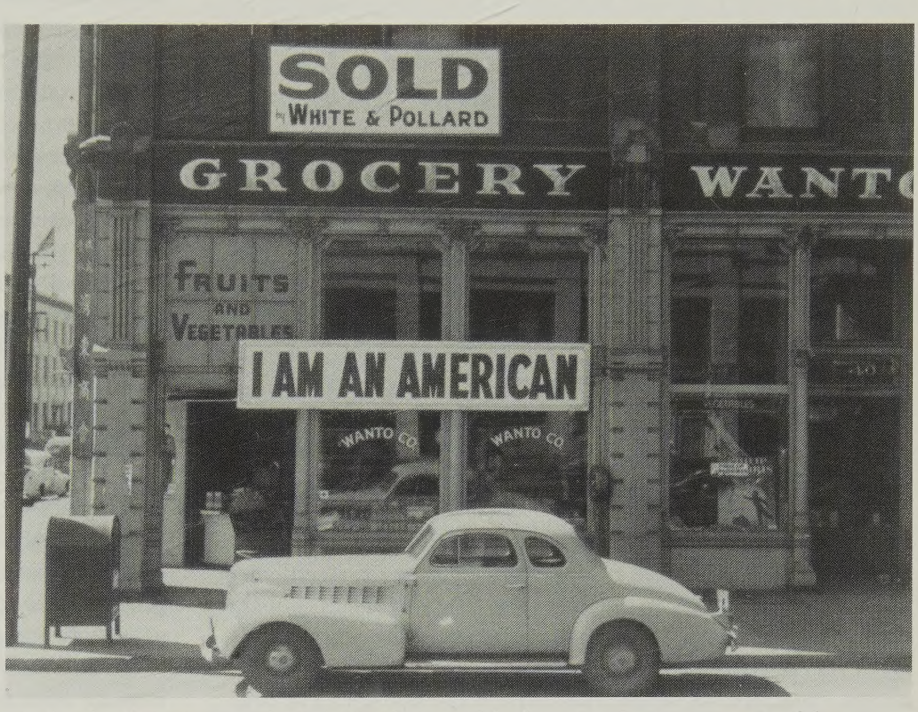
Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii on December 7, 1941, shocked and jolted America out of isolationism. As people in the United States rallied to fight back against enemies abroad, many Americans became suspicious of internal enemies on the homefront. As a result, existing racial prejudice against the Japanese American community was greatly magnified, fueled by the emotional intensity surrounding the Pearl Harbor attack and the war with Japan.

Executive Order 9066, signed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt on February 19, 1942, designated areas of the United States from which the military could exclude "any or all persons" deemed as suspect to America's national security. As a result, 70,000 American citizens of Japanese ancestry and 40,000 Japanese resident aliens living on the West Coast were hastily rounded up and forcibly moved under military guard to concentration camps.[1] Many Japanese American families lost their homes, businesses, farms, and other possessions as they were forced to sell for pittance, give away, destroy, or abandon nearly everything they owned. None of these people were charged with any crime, other than being of Japanese descent.

Most people were loaded onto buses and taken to temporary camps, known as "assembly centers," that had been built at county fairgrounds and racetracks. Once there, detainees were moved into crowded and primitive barracks, some living in converted horse stables. They lived at these centers for approximately four months before being shipped by train to one of 10 isolated and more permanent concentration camps.

One of these concentration camps—Poston—was built on the Colorado River Indian Reservation (CRIR) in Arizona. In an ironic twist of history, the Japanese American detainees at Poston experienced what American Indians encountered in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Citing national security and the need to protect white settlers, the U.S. government had similarly herded American Indians onto this desolate, arid, and unproductive stretch of land.

From 1942 to 1945, approximately 18,000 Japanese American detainees and 1,200 members of the Mohave and Chemehuevi tribes shared a desert home. The story that follows revisits the controversial decision made by the U.S. government to construct the Poston internment camp on the CRIR, and examines this piece of history as it was experienced by the Japanese American and American Indian communities.



Oakland, California, March 13, 1942. Photograph by Dorothea Lange. Courtesy of the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

Defining generations of Japanese Americans

Certain terms are used to describe the generations of Japanese living in America. The immigrant generation is referred to as Issei (first generation in America). American-born children of the Issei are called Nisei (second generation). American-born children of Nisei are referred to as Sansei (third generation). A unique category—Kibei—refers to Nisei children who were sent to Japan by their Issei parents to acquire a Japanese education and later returned to the United States. For the sake of brevity, Issei (Japanese resident alien) and Nisei (American-born citizens) will be used hereafter.

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE POSTON CAMP

When the U.S. government agencies decided to build a concentration camp on the CRIR, they had two purposes in mind. The stated purpose, of course, was to incarcerate 20,000 people of Japanese ancestry who had been removed from the military zone along the West Coast. The other purpose is an untold story, where the Office of Indian Affairs (OIA), the military, and the WRA made a special arrangement in the creation and establishment of the Poston Camp. The OIA incorporated special projects at Poston that affected the Colorado River Indian Tribes (CRIT), their reservation, and the Japanese American detainees.

Creation of Poston: Office of Indian Affairs (OIA) and the War Relocation Authority (WRA)

During the early months of 1942, immediately following Pearl Harbor and the U.S. entry into World War II (WWII), the National Defense Migration (NDM) Committee held public hearings in the House of Representatives. The hearings discussed the problem of "enemy aliens"—the Italian, German, and Japanese resident aliens, as well as the Nisei. The hearings also focused on evacuation, where to resettle the Issei and Nisei detainees, and the type of resettlement work the detainees would do.

On March 18, 1942, President Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9102,[2] which created the War Relocation Authority (WRA), a civilian agency. The WRA was authorized to oversee the resettlement of the Japanese American detainees and to construct, in cooperation with the military, 10 concentration camps. In addition, the WRA was responsible to supervise all human activities in the camps. President Roosevelt chose Milton Eisenhower as its first director.

But before President Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9102 into law, the military had already "acquired sites for two large camps, one at Manzanar, California and the other at Parker, Arizona."[3] The two camps were to serve as temporary "way stations" for Japanese Americans who wished to "voluntarily relocate" to states further inland. However, when a small number of Issei and Nisei voluntarily moved from the West Coast, they found a hostile reception with threats of mob violence in many intermountain states.[4] As a consequence, the "voluntary relocation" policy was halted. However, emotional and political tensions intensified as anti-Japanese sentiments called for the removal of Japanese resident aliens and American-born Japanese from the West Coast. The general public sentiments were: "Herd 'em up, pack 'em off and give them the inside room of the badlands. Let 'em be pinched, hurt, hungry, and dead up against it."[5]

The government decided to forcibly remove the entire West Coast Japanese American community into 16 temporary "assembly centers" until 10 permanent concentration camps could be built. The site at Parker, Arizona, or the site on the CRIR, became a permanent "relocation camp" and was named Poston after Arizona's Superintendent of Indian Affairs, Charles D. Poston. The decision of where to build the concentration camps became problematic as governors and other politicians in the intermountain states said, "not in our backyard." Therefore, the WRA set some requirements as they looked for sites in remote and isolated regions of the country. The WRA outlined five requirements: 1) The site must be located on public land so that improvements at public expense become public, not private, assets. 2) Because of military manpower considerations, the sites had to be adequate for large projects. 3) Each center must provide work opportunities throughout the year, such as land subjugation, food production, and the production of war goods. 4) All centers must be located at a safe distance from strategic works, e.g., military base, etc. 5) Transportation and power facilities, water supply, soil, climate and similar factors must be satisfactory.[6]

Eight of the 10 camps were eventually constructed in barren and remote desert environments or in remote areas with severe weather conditions; two camps in Arkansas were built on isolated, swampy land (see Appendix A).

Besides the CRIR, several Indian reservations were considered as potential sites for a concentration camp in Arizona, Minnesota, Montana, and Wyoming.[7] However, in the end, only two reservations in Arizona—the CRIR and the Gila River Reservation—were used as sites for a concentration camp.

What made the Poston Camp unique was the pivotal role the OIA (known today as the Bureau of Indian Affairs) played in the creation of Poston as well as its daily operation and management. Poston was the only camp managed by the OIA with WRA policies and projects also in place. So, two simultaneous programs and projects were operating in Poston. The OIA had its projects and objectives, and the WRA had its mission and goals.

What were the reasons for the OIA to be so intimately involved with the Poston Camp? To understand how and why the OIA was involved in the establishment of a concentration camp on the CRIR, we need to review the circumstances of how the CRIR was created and what was happening there politically in the early 1940s.

CRIT History: Establishment of the Colorado River Indian Reservation

The Colorado River Indian Reservation was established by Congress on March 3, 1865, and approved by President Lincoln. Colonel Charles D. Poston, Superintendent of Indian Affairs in the Arizona territory, played an important role in the establishment of the reservation. Poston recognized the importance of irrigation to the establishment of a reservation and wrote:

> After a careful investigation of conditions among these Indians, it was determined to select a reservation for them on the bank of the Colorado and ask the Government to aid them in opening an irrigation canal, so they may become industrious and self-supporting....The valley selected for a reservation is called ...the 'Great Valley of the Colorado'....This reservation would include about 75,000 acres of land, all public domain and uncultivated. It is proposed to colonize some 10,000 Indians within its boundaries. The estimated expense of opening an irrigating canal here is $50,000 gold, or $100,000 currency....The rapid influx of population in this region ren-

ders it necessary that some provision should be made for the original inhabitants.[8]

Violent encounters between the American Indians and the U.S. military preceded the establishment of the CRIR. Before the reservation was established in 1865, the Mohaves were the largest Yuman-speaking group living along the Colorado River from what is now the border of Arizona with Nevada and California. For centuries, different Yuman-speaking Indians and Southern Paiute bands lived on this ancestral territory. The indigenous Mohave tribe had lived on this land for "time immemorial." But in the mid-19th century, white settlers supported by the U.S. Army had ambitious goals to "reap the riches" of the vast southwestern territory. They began to encroach on Indian territory.[9]

Warfare that had begun in 1858 between the U.S. Army and the Mohaves took a sudden turn in 1859 when the U. S. soldiers used their rifles "to mow down the Mohave warriors" and ended the Mohaves' resistance. The slaughter ended with the internment of the surviving Mohaves onto a reservation established for them at Fort Mohave.[10] The large Mohave group divided into two groups; one remained at Fort Mohave Valley, and the other half, under the leadership of Chief Yara Tav's (also spelled Irataba) moved south to the lower Colorado River Valley near what is presently Parker, Arizona. In 1865, the CRIR was established for the Mohaves who had settled there. The more nomadic Chemehuevi tribe settled on the reservation later.[11]

Following the establishment of the CRIR, the succeeding superintendent for Arizona had high hopes of assembling all the tribes living along the Colorado River tributaries to this reservation.[12] However, plans to colonize the 10,000 Indians to the CRIR never materialized. The government made several attempts to "convince the Indians living along the Colorado River area in Arizona" to move to the CRIR, but the efforts failed. In one such case, the government compelled the Walapais (approximately 500 to 800 people) by force of arms to move to the CRIR. When the Army left, the tribe returned to their original homes. (Eventually, a separate reservation was created for them by several Executive Orders dating from January 4, 1883 to July 18, 1913.)[13]

The first effort by the government, in 1867, to construct an irrigation system failed due to faulty design or construction. When the water was first turned on, the quantity of water was greater than the system could hold, causing the banks to collapse. Several other attempts were made to extend water to the CRIR by using "steam pumps, water wheels, windmills, etc." After almost 65 years, a diversion dam—the Headgate Rock Dam—was finally completed in 1941.

By 1940, there were complicated political issues surrounding the "boundaries" of the CRIR, the development of an irrigation system, and plans to "colonize" the CRIR with American Indians from other southwestern reservations. On November 15, 1940, a confidential report proposed "A Program for the Utilization of the Colorado River Indian Reservation."[14] This proposal served as a "blueprint" for the OIA officials as they drew up plans, with the military and the WRA, for Poston.

Issues Important to the Creation of Poston on the CRIR

The 1940 utilization proposal appeared to be background material for the OIA to request legislative action and funding from Congress to develop a workable irrigation system and resources to implement a colonization program. A main canal was started from the newly-built Headgate Rock Dam to the CRIR. However, when WWII began, only a few miles of the canal had been completed; additional work was needed to expand the canal system to the reservation.

The 1940 confidential report re-stated the original purpose and intent of the CRIR to "colonize 10,000 American Indians" to the reservation and to develop an irrigation system to make the CRIR self-supporting. However, the colonization program raised some legal and historical questions as to whether other non-related Indians had a legal right to move to the CRIR. The Mohaves, who had lived on this land for centuries, fought for years against the colonization of non-related Indians to their reservation. The proposal stated that CRIT should be kept informed of the anticipated legislative action, but if CRIT didn't agree to the colonization program, the land would pass into "white ownership."[15]

The confidential report was written a year before the Pearl Harbor attack on December 7, 1941. Once John Collier, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, realized that the War Department needed "isolated and sparsely-populated" land to build internment camps, Collier suggested the CRIR as one site for an internment camp.

By establishing a relocation camp on the CRIR, the OIA could expedite the 1940 utilization plans to improve the undeveloped acres of the reservation. Placing a concentration camp on the CRIR would not only provide the War Department with one campsite, but also help the OIA meet its proposed utilization objectives: to develop the needed irrigation system and subjugation of undeveloped acres, and fulfill the expressed purpose established for CRIR in 1865 to colonize more American Indians to the reservation.

In 1940, the government reported that the 1,200 Mohaves and Chemehuevis utilized only a small fraction of the northern region of the vast reservation. Out of 242,711 acres, the CRIT tribes were using approximately 7,000 acres, which were irrigated by pumps. According to the report, there were approximately 100,000 irrigable acres available for potential development. The government believed the Mohave and Chemehuevi tribes could utilize, at most, 25,000 acres of the northern region.[16]

A long-standing controversial water rights battle for appropriation of the Colorado River between seven states—in particular between California and Arizona—was a pressing issue among the politicians at the time.[17] With the pressures of WWII, the OIA had an opportunity to push the water rights issue guaranteed by the 1865 Act. There was the possibility that the OIA could lose the valuable water rights if they did not act.

By offering the CRIR as a potential campsite, a workable irrigation system long sought after by the OIA could finally become a reality. With access to additional water, more acres of the reservation could be subjugated and more land made productive. Subjugation of the land meant digging irrigation ditches, building canals, leveling the land, and preparing the land for receiving water and planting crops. With the availability of Japanese American detainee labor and the need to channel water to the Poston Camp, the prospect of constructing a workable irrigation system became feasible.

While previous attempts to colonize the CRIR had failed, a colonization program incorporated with the Poston project would

have a chance to succeed. At the time, American Indians living on other southwestern reservations were struggling to make a living off their arid land. Overgrazing and lack of water were the primary causes of their desperate situation. By activating a colonization program when the Japanese detainees moved out of Poston, the vacated barracks would provide immediate housing for future colonists.[18] With the colonization of other Indians to Poston, school facilities would be needed. Thus, the manufacturing of adobe bricks and the construction of adobe school buildings were important projects undertaken by the OIA in Poston with Japanese American detainee labor. Poston, therefore, had two separate and overlapping programs and projects managed daily by the OIA with cooperation from the WRA.

How Poston Came to Be

Two weeks *after* Executive Order 9066 became law and *before* President Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9102 (WRA) on March 18, 1942, men from the War Department[19] visited the CRIR to inspect the site for potential use as a relocation camp. Commissioner Collier had suggested the use of the CRIR on March 4, 1942.

On March 9, 1942, a meeting was held in Los Angeles where members from the War Department, Office of Interior, and OIA discussed the location of the Poston camp, availability of water, source of electrical power, and other related matters.[20]

On March 21, 1942, Eisenhower wrote to Commissioner Collier outlining his understanding of their working relationship (see Appendix C). The letter extended authority to the OIA to manage the "Poston Relocation Project." Eisenhower stated in his letter that the WRA would place a representative in Poston to cooperate with the OIA project director. Out of the 214 staff members at Poston, four were on the WRA payroll while 210 were on the OIA payroll.[21]

When Willard W. Beatty, OIA Director of Education, learned that the proposed school buildings in Poston would revert to the Indian Service for their program, he assigned men from the OIA to Poston. Also, engineers, construction superintendents, foremen, and survey parties arrived from the Colorado River Indian Irrigation Project and continued in their former duties at Poston.

Henry Welsh, Chairman, CRIT Tribal Council, 1942. Photograph from WRA 1967.014, Group 10, Vol. 1, Sect A, WRA no. A-306. The Bancroft Library, University of California.

In April 1942, Collier wrote to Henry Welsh, Chairman of CRIT Tribal Council, to negotiate the terms of compensation for use of the CRIT land. His letter acknowledged that the War Department had already begun construction and that the OIA could not offer any objection. In exchange for use of the land, the U.S. government promised that the land would be returned substantially improved for future agricultural use by CRIT.

Meanwhile, Assistant Commissioner William Zimmerman of the OIA wrote the following letter to the House of Representatives, outlining how the OIA would administer their program at Poston. The letter proposed the use of Japanese American detainees to subjugate the land for eventual colonization of other American Indians to the CRIR after the war.

> April 11, 1942
>
> My Dear Mr. Tolan:
>
> I am glad to supply the information requested in your letter of April 7, 1942, concerning the Japanese projects with which we are connected.
>
> The first of the projects is located on the Colorado River Indian Reservation near the town of Parker, Ariz. Plans call for the establishment on this reservation of three camps, 1 of 10,000 and 2 of 5,000 each. The Indian Service has initiated on this reservation a long-range program for the irrigation and subjugation of nearly 100,000 acres of hitherto waste land. A diversion dam across the Colorado River has been completed and a canal constructed from this dam for a distance of a little more than a mile to connect with an existing irrigation project covering about 8,000 acres of land now utilized by some 1,200 Indians living on the reservation.
>
> South of this cultivated area lies a stretch of 30 miles of waste land which we have planned to irrigate and on which we plan to colonize Indians from a number of the southwestern reservations where Indian land resources are inadequate.
>
> The first work program, therefore, for the Japanese will be in the subjugation of this land and its preparation for irrigation. At the present the program contemplates the subjugation of approximately 10,000 acres of land and its cultivation as rapidly as possible. The work projects consist of canal construction, the digging of laterals and drainage ditches, the throwing up of flood levees and the clearing and leveling of the land. We believe that as rapidly as the land is ready for cultivation we shall have water for it and that by next spring perhaps several hundred acres can be put into cultivation.[22]

Thus, a unique arrangement to administer a program for the WRA in Poston was formalized and secured in Congress. Zimmerman outlined other public work projects that the Japanese Issei and Nisei would be involved in during their incarceration at Poston. He continued in his letter, "We are now attempting to ascertain what products needed by the War Department could readily be manufactured by the colonists with simple machinery."

The three governmental agencies—the military, the WRA, and the OIA—cooperated to merge the OIA's 1940 subjugation and colonization plans with the military and WRA objectives of incarcerating the Japanese Issei and Nisei. As a result, two simultaneous programs and projects were operating in Poston from its inception using Japanese American laborers for both OIA and WRA projects.

Advantages of the "Poston Relocation Project" for OIA and WRA

The OIA's arrangement with the military, and later with the

Office of Indian Affairs (OIA)

- Responsible for the administrative staff, 210 on OIA payroll, 4 on WRA payroll.
- Initiated subjugation and irrigation projects. Engineers and other technicians from Indian Service recruited to manage the projects.
- Set up a colonization program to be activated when Japanese American detainees moved out of the barracks, thus providing immediate housing for American Indian "colonists."
- Manufactured adobe bricks and constructed adobe school buildings. Trained managers from Indian Service recruited to oversee the project (Operations and Maintenance Department).

War Relocation Authority (WRA) and military

- Responsible for construction of Poston barracks and other related buildings.
- Responsible for construction of roads, clearing bushes, leveling land, etc.
- Responsible for cost of building materials and maintenance of Poston buildings.
- Responsible for cost of feeding detainees—chicken and hog farms and agricultural farms.
- Responsible for educational system.

WRA, offered advantages to all three government agencies. From the OIA perspective, the creation of the Poston Camp provided direct access to President Roosevelt's emergency war fund. The funding provided resources to implement the 1940 utilization plans to construct the needed irrigation system, to implement a colonization program, and to construct the adobe school buildings with Japanese American detainee labor. The Poston barracks provided immediate housing for the colonization program after the detainees moved out of the camps.

From the WRA and military perspectives, Poston provided a needed site for a concentration camp and one less camp to recruit, staff, and manage. The OIA covered the payroll cost of the administrative staff.

Important benefits for both OIA and WRA (short-term benefit for WRA and long-term benefit for OIA) were the subjugation and irrigation projects that extended water to Poston (southern region of the CRIR). In addition, the construction of the adobe school buildings and roads provided "work opportunities" for Poston detainees as required by the WRA. Overall, the reservation's undeveloped land was made useable and productive.

Establishing a concentration camp on the CRIR, however, did not meet with approval from the CRIT Tribal Council or the CRIT community. Nor did the idea of colonizing their reservation with other non-related Indians appeal to them. In fact, the CRIT Council and community were upset and adamantly opposed to the Poston Camp and the colonization program. But CRIT was in a terrible bind. If they rejected the demands of the WRA and the OIA, they risked permanent loss of the land set aside for Poston to the government or possibly to white farmers. If they agreed to Poston, they would be condoning the presence of a concentration camp on their reservation, which they did not support. Faced with this dilemma, the CRIT Tribal Council decided not to respond.

While the CRIT Tribal Council and its people disapproved of the Poston project, the white businessmen in Parker, Arizona viewed it as a positive move. As one man said, "The project's going to be good for the country. It will develop a lot of land, bring in irrigation, so white farmers can use it. White men can't work out on the reservation now." The Parker businessmen felt that bringing the Japanese to the reservation and putting them to work—whether they liked it or not—was going to help the Indians. With the government helping the Indians, the white businessmen reasoned, their position would be helped as well. Besides, one white person said, "After the war, the way I'd do it, the Japs ought to be sent out and the land offered to the Indians. Then whatever the Indians didn't take, the whites ought to be able to have. Couldn't let good land like that go to waste." [23]

As government officials moved forward with the planned organizational structure of Poston and its projects, the massive relocation program had enormous human consequences for the Japanese American detainees as well as for the CRIT community and other American Indian colonists who eventually came to live in Poston.

Incarceration of the People of Japanese Ancestry

With the public outcry for complete removal of Japanese Issei and Nisei from the West Coast growing ever more vocal and shrilled, several members of Congress from California, Oregon, and Washington became the moving forces behind the urgency for evacuation in early January 1942. The Committee on Evacuation of Japanese from the Pacific Coast made a recommendation to President Roosevelt that all Japanese, whether citizens or not, be placed in inland concentration camps.[24] The committee felt that the American-born Nisei "had an opportunity" to prove their patriotism by being willing to move, and the act of "being placed in a concentration camp" would contribute to the safety and welfare of America.[25]

Under pressure from Congress and the public, the U.S. Attorney General initiated the drafting of Executive Order 9066, transferring authority and designation of military areas over to the Army. In essence, Executive Order 9066 established a form of limited martial law that permitted control over all persons in designated military areas on the West Coast. Lt. General DeWitt, of the Western Defense Command and Commander of the Fourth U.S. Army, said of the Germans and Italians living in America, "[You] don't have to worry about them as a group. You have to worry about them purely as certain individuals." He continued, "Out here, a Jap is a Jap to people now."[26]

Supported by the public's strong anti-Japanese sentiments, DeWitt ordered the removal of 110,000[27] people of Japanese ancestry from the West Coast states. Two-thirds of the 110,000 detainees were American citizens. Many were young, ranging in age from infants to high school age. Stripped of their constitutional rights, the Japanese detainees were never told what crimes they had committed nor given an opportunity to defend themselves.[28]

Japanese Americans from San Diego area boarding train for internment, 1942. Photograph courtesy of the Japanese American Historical Society of San Diego.

Soft dust covered the unpaved road from Parker to Poston, causing buses to get stuck. Photograph from WRA 1967.014, Group 5, Vol. 1, Sect A, WRA no. A-138. The Bancroft Library, University of California.

Train Ride to Poston

Beginning on May 8, 1942, thousands of Issei, Nisei, and young Sansei moved into their guarded desert home. Wade Head, Project Director of Poston, wrote in a "welcoming letter" dated May 28, 1942 that he was aware of the "crowded" and "temporary conditions" of the barrack apartments, which still needed partitions and other home furnishings. He expressed hope that the detainees would "be happy" in their new community, as they were in the homes they had just left behind.

> Poston has been set aside as a relocation center, and what it develops into is entirely dependent upon the colonists themselves. If each and every person in the community will assume his full share of the responsibility and do his full share of work, Poston can be made into one of the model communities of the country. To accomplish this end, and to create a community of which every member can be proud, it is vital that everyone make his full contribution.[29]

With the arrival of the detainees, this vast reservation with a population of about 1,200 was transformed into what became the third largest city in Arizona in 1942 and the largest of the 10 concentration camps.[30]

For the detainees, strong dust storms made the long bus ride from the train station in Parker, Arizona to the Poston Camp a perilous journey. Sudden and fierce, these dust storms caused buses to get stuck in the deep, soft dust that covered the unpaved road. One San Diego detainee recalled the 25-mile ride from Parker to Camp III:

> The bus trip to Poston III was long and dusty. So dusty that the sky was blotted out completely. At first we tried to keep the windows of the school bus that was transporting us closed, but it was so hot—over 110 degrees—that people, especially the older people, and the kids, were getting sick. So

we opened the windows. Immediately everyone was covered by dust. When…[a group] got off the bus everyone was covered by this thick layer of dust. I know you won't believe this, but it's really true, friends couldn't recognize each other.[31]

Each camp block had fourteen barracks. Photograph from WRA 1967.014, Group 10, Vol. 1, Sect A, WRA no. A-191. The Bancroft Library, University of California.

Another detainee recalled the dust as he tried to eat his first dinner at Poston Camp III. His baloney and rice were covered with dust that blew in from the holes and gaps in the mess hall floor. He was unable to eat his dust-covered dinner that first night.[32]

Once there, the detainees were moved into guarded compounds. The hastily-constructed barracks were 20 feet x 120 feet. The barracks were divided into one-room "apartments" that varied in size: 16 feet x 20 feet, 20 feet x 20 feet, or 24 feet x 20 feet. Depending on their size, each family was assigned to an apartment. Partitions that separated the apartments extended only to the eaves, leaving a gap between the walls and the roof. Conversations and noises could be heard between apartments, if not the entire length of the barrack. Often, the lumber had been green when it was used for construction; the wood shrunk as it dried, leaving gaps that allowed dust to blow into the barracks. Eventually, mastipave, a substitute for linoleum, was put into the mess halls and barracks to cover the floor.[33]

The camp barracks were arranged in blocks, with 14 apartment barracks per block. Each block had a mess hall (eating hall), separate public bathrooms for men and women, a laundry and ironing room, and a recreation building. "These army-type facilities had no toilet partitions or bathtubs and very little hot water."[34]

In the fall of 1942, Poston still lacked adequate provisions for living. As described in a recent publication, *Confinement and Ethnicity*:

> By the fall of 1942 heating stoves had not yet been installed, so barracks and offices were unheated, and extremely cold without wallboard or insulation. Evacuees huddled around makeshift bonfires within each block for warmth. In addition, promised clothing and clothing allowances had not been delivered, and salaries had not been paid since September. Adding insult to injury, government resources were spent to fence in the evacuees rather than to remedy these problems or to construct chicken and hog farms that could alleviate food shortages. Further, the administration was seen as curtailing the power of the evacuees' representative council, misappropriating supplies meant for evacuees, and fomenting paranoia by soliciting information about troublemakers.[35]

However, the Poston Camp had conveniences lacking in many CRIT homes, including electricity, flushing toilets, and showers. In most cases, the Poston barracks were better "houses" compared to what was available to the CRIT community at that time.

Adobe Bricks and Buildings

The Poston Relocation Project began with great expectations within the OIA. Collier had assembled the needed expertise from other OIA regional offices to implement its proposed program. In the early months of planning and building the structures of Poston, the Army engineers and OIA expected the Japanese detainees to stay permanently in camp for the duration of the war. As a result, they prepared a "large amount of useful work" for the detainees to do "during a period of several years." In a speech to Poston detainees on June 27, 1942, Collier said, "It is probable that you here will be looking forward to four, five, or six years of life in this place."[36]

The construction of the adobe school buildings in all three camps was the biggest project undertaken by the Construction and Maintenance Department in Poston. The Poston Chronicle, published by the detainees and circulated to all three camps, had daily ads listing various job openings. Job openings related to the adobe brick factory and school construction were listed often in the paper.

The OIA staff made a concerted effort to persuade the parents and the community to get involved in the construction of the adobe schools for their children's sake. At the same time, there were rumors among the detainees that the school buildings, when completed, would be for the Indians rather than the Japanese schoolchildren.[37]

Recruiting workers for the adobe brick factory was difficult in the beginning, with only girls and women responding. The adobe brick factory became popular when men were eventually "shamed" into working. According to one report: "Women employees laid most of the adobe and applied a clay finish on the adobe walls."[38] Charles A. Popkin, Construction Engineer, reported that women made "better workers than men" since they didn't complain and they worked continuously, intelligently, and worked well.[39]

By January 1943, Camp II went from seeking workers to pleading for "volunteers" in the Poston Chronicle. The daily paper began to publish the number of adobe bricks made by each block's volunteers. For example, one headline in the Camp II section read, "Block 226 Tops Adobe Making Records." The article listed the production accomplishments by block number, hours worked, and the number of adobe bricks made. Schoolchildren were even recruited for volunteer work on weekends and their production numbers published. The reporting of "which block produced the most adobe bricks" kept the project going and the urgency of working on the school buildings alive in the minds of the detainees.

The reality of education at the centers was a far cry from the picture created by WRA early planning. At the time of occupancy, there was a complete lack of construction materials for school buildings; they could not be obtained.[40] The school buildings were

Left, a female detainee pressing material into an adobe brick mold 12 inches x 18 inches x 4 inches. Photograph from WRA 1967.014, Group 36, Vol. 3, Sect A, WRA no. A-866. The Bancroft Library, University of California. Right, adobe bricks drying in the hot Arizona sun. Photograph from WRA 1967.014, Group 14, Vol. 2, Sect A, WRA no. A-340. The Bancroft Library, University of California.

designed and drafted by Japanese American detainees; Mr. Hirose, a practicing architect from Los Angeles lead the team with the assistance of draftsmen Hayano, Takeda, Wake, and Hanamoto. All worked under the direction of Charles Popkin.[41]

Project Director Wade Head announced in the Poston Chronicle on December 29, 1942 that Poston was "granted high priority" for the purchase of building materials to be used in the construction of schools. Dr. Miles Carey, Director of Education, in the same article, said, "[T]he completion and use of these new school buildings will probably be the most important thing that could happen in this Center." By September 30, 1943, approximately 500,000 adobe bricks were made in the three camps, each brick being 12 inches x 18 inches x 4 inches.

During the early months of 1943, negative press coverage about school construction at the Amache Camp in Colorado forced the WRA to cancel their overall building plans for schools. The general public in Colorado felt that public tax money should be spent on public schools, not building schools in the camps. The strong public outcry in the state of Colorado and elsewhere forced the WRA, thereafter, to use barracks for camp schools rather than constructing special buildings—except for the Poston adobe school project.

The OIA outlined in the fall of 1944 its plans for the future of the "Colorado River Reservation" and stated what they hoped to accomplish. Included in the discussion was the subjugation and colonization program that was part of the Poston Relocation Project. The report explained the high priority for the school building materials and reasons for the Poston "activities":

> Much of the planning and activities of the Poston Relocation Project have been done with the view of developing the resources for the benefit of the future Indian program. Irrigation canals, roads, land leveling, domestic water supply, power lines, and some of the buildings are some of the more permanent aspects of the Poston Relocation Project which will carry over into the Indian program. *The adobe school buildings have been developed as a special concession in the interest of the permanent Indian Service program and will offer an immediate set of facilities for the use of the service when the Japanese project closes.*[42] (emphasis added)

Work on the adobe school buildings continued for almost the duration of Poston camp life. The entire project was finally completed in March 1945, eight months before Poston officially closed in November. A total of 54 school buildings were built in the three camps.[43]

School Life at the Camps

When school started for the detainee children in the fall of 1942, the adobe brick production had just begun. Barracks were initially used as classrooms, but they lacked tables and chairs. The detainee carpenters worked overtime to make tables in time for the opening of school, but it was impossible to make chairs in time, so the students carried folding chairs to school each day. As was the case in all 10 concentration camps, the Poston schools lacked adequate supplies of books, writing materials, and other items necessary for carrying on an educational program.

Amid the construction chaos and disruption of their normal school life, the students tried to adjust. A group of junior high and high school students in Camp I, with the help of teachers, shared their thoughts and feelings in essays and poems. They compiled their work into an album called *Out of the Desert* and sent it to outside pen pals at the American Junior Red Cross.[44] The majority of the writings focused on the circumstances of Poston, the harshness of the desert, the difficulties of attending school in Camp I, and the daily activities at Poston. Despite the incomprehensible reasons for being placed in the desert, some students believed in the ultimate triumph of American fairness. Except for one student who wrote about "Indians of the Southwest," the majority did not focus on the irony of being on the CRIR. In fact, their teacher, Ray

Franchi, referred to Poston as being on "an abandoned Indian reservation."

Meanwhile, several miles north of Camp I, Indian students at the Colorado River Indian School were also writing down their thoughts about the war in their school paper, the *Colorado River Star*. Whereas the students in Camp I shared their stories about life in the camps, the students at the Colorado River Indian School wrote about the war and its impact on their reservation. Even the young students were aware that Japanese American detainees—as well as Italian and German prisoners of war (POWs)—were living on their reservation. The students wrote about the POWs working at the American Indian School, doing chores such as painting the classrooms or helping the CRIT farmers with their crops.

One CRIT student wrote about the Japanese American farm near the school. "The Japanese farmers are showing on the school land here what can be done in this valley toward vegetable raising. They have been raising vegetables, not by the basketful, but by the truckload—and fine ones, too. Their cantaloupes, lettuce, spinach, and other vegetables have been as good as can be grown any place. They have shown that this valley has great possibilities as a vegetable growing center."[45] The WRA had leased property from the Indian school for the Japanese farmers to raise vegetables for the camps. With the Japanese Americans leveling the land and clearing the stumps, the school secured labor benefits to subjugate school land that it could not afford to do in the past.

The *Colorado River Star* began as a school publication but eventually became a community paper with information about CRIT that was sent to American Indian soldiers stationed abroad. The two schools—Poston and the Colorado River Indian School—were in close proximity, but seemed worlds apart as the students wrote of their separate realities. In both cases, however, Caucasian teachers or administrators had the final say in how each paper was compiled.

Students from the Colorado River Indian School and the Poston camp schools had no apparent contact with each other except for basketball games where the American Indians attending high school in Parker, Arizona interacted with Japanese Americans in Poston. Orlando Laffoon, a Mohave, was a member of the Parker basketball team that traveled to Poston in 1942 to play in Camp I. Laffoon remembered a lecture the team received before they departed for Poston. "Be careful with the girls," they were told. Recalling his trip to Poston in 1942, Laffoon said, "I got a better picture of what the relocation was all about."

For the students, the basketball tournament became a bridge to meet each other. According to the Poston Chronicle, the Parker high school team defeated two Poston teams on December 22, 1942. The next week, the Poston Camp III All-Stars "edged out a 31–29 win" over the Parker Indian team. The "nit and tuck" game was thoroughly described in the sports section of the Poston Chronicle. The Parker players' names were recorded along with the Poston players' names, as well as the scores made by each.

For the detainees, the game of basketball became a means to connect and relate to their American Indian neighbors. Besides the high school tournament, the Parker team once played the "20 Squares," a group of older Poston detainees. As reported on February 18, 1943, forward Roy Yamano played a "plenty hot" game by "scoring 20 digits" and shared the court with fellow teammates Paul Nagano and John Miyabe, who scored 10 points each.

While the construction of the adobe brick school buildings continued with its many obstacles, the human interaction through a game of basketball brought some excitement and challenges to the high school students at Parker and Poston. However, for most of the adults, the interaction between the CRIT community and the Poston detainees continued to be nonexistent.

Falling Short

In the beginning, Collier and the OIA had high hopes for the combined OIA and WRA projects. What Collier did not anticipate, however, was that the Japanese American detainees would be given an option to leave Poston. With the resignation of Eisenhower from the WRA in June 1942, his successor, Dillon Myer, changed the focus of the Poston Relocation Center. Whereas Eisenhower thought the detainees would live and work in the internment camps for the duration of the war,[46] Myer sought to relocate and disperse Japanese American detainees out of the WRA camps to other states outside the Western region. As a result, a relocation policy was instituted in the WRA camps.

In January 1943, the Army reversed its earlier decision that classified all Nisei as ineligible for military service and formed a special Japanese American combat team. To determine whether individuals leaving the WRA camps were a threat to national security, the Army and the WRA developed a "Leave Clearance Questionnaire" to collect detainee information for the FBI and other security agencies.

All detainees over the age of 17 were required to fill out the questionnaire regardless of whether they planned to relocate from camp or not. Buried within this lengthy questionnaire were two questions that came to be known as the "loyalty questions"—#27 and #28. Depending on how the detainees answered the two questions, they were identified as either "loyal" (yes-yes) or "disloyal" (no-no) Americans. Many books and video documentaries have covered this topic, so it will not be covered here except to say that the "Leave Clearance Questionnaire" caused a deep rift and divided the Japanese American detainee community during the war and for many years thereafter.

Ironically, WRA Director Dillon Myer became Commissioner of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (formerly OIA) in 1950. Myer replaced many experienced BIA staff with former WRA staff who had worked for him during the war. A relocation policy similar to what Myer introduced and advocated in the WRA camps was introduced to American Indian tribes in the 1950s.[47] Under this policy, Indians were convinced to move out of reservations and into cities, where, they were told, jobs and a better life awaited them.

The original Poston project created and nurtured by Collier and his staff was forced to accommodate the departure of able-bodied workers for either military service, attendance at college, or outside employment. In January and February 1943, the population at Poston had peaked at 17,731. By July 1943, the population had dropped to 15,679, a reduction of 2,051 people.[48] The subjugation and construction projects had to be modified. An acute and ongoing labor shortage persisted for the duration of the Poston projects as the camp population fluctuated.

Myer believed that the Japanese American detainees needed to

be integrated into the European American culture/community so that in "four to five generations" the Japanese would not know any other culture but European American culture. He admonished those leaving the camps to "not cluster together" in a Japanese American community as they had done before the war. For Myer, integration or assimilation meant that the Japanese people had to "melt or boil away"[49] their language, traditions, cultural values, beliefs (e.g., Buddhism), and other cultural identities. In other words, they should try to be as European American as possible.

While the relocation program sought to find "qualified Japanese" to move out of the camps, the WRA appealed to outside employers and the general public to hire the Japanese American detainees. A WRA promotional brochure, entitled "Relocating a People," began by saying:

> In ten wartime communities in the western part of the United States, more than a hundred thousand men, women, and children are living temporarily, awaiting an opportunity to resume normal lives in ordinary communities. All of them are of Japanese descent, and were evacuated from strategic military areas of the West Coast in the spring and summer of 1942. These wartime communities, known as relocation centers, were established when it became evident that such a large number of people could not immediately locate themselves successfully in new communities. There was no intent to remove from them any of their rights or to deprive them of the opportunity of earning a livelihood and contributing to the Nation's economy.[50]

The brochure concluded that both the War Department and the Department of Justice had examined and approved the relocation program and assured the public that each detainee was investigated by the FBI for prior records, "previous behavior," and attitudes before a relocation leave was granted.

In addition to the loss of able-bodied workers to military service, college, and relocation leaves, other factors contributed to the "scaled back" program at Poston. R. H. Rupkey, Chief Engineer, reported that the building of the main water canal moved slowly because of the "unwillingness of the Japanese" to work on the structures. The Japanese were willing to work on the relocation centers, but not on structures that were of no immediate benefit to them. Also, the detainees could not be persuaded to work eight hours a day as tractor operators, so the OIA had to hire white operators to keep the work on schedule. The Japanese American workers felt that $19.00 per month was inadequate pay for heavy construction work.[51]

Wade Head. Photograph from WRA 1967.014, Group 36, Vol. 3, Sect A, WRA no. A-864. The Bancroft Library, University of California.

Low wages and unwilling workers—combined with perpetual dust, unbearable summer heat, and the constant shortage of proper equipment—contributed to the difficulties the OIA and WRA experienced with their work projects. Additionally, many of the detainees were inexperienced, having never worked as carpenters or in construction. However, as of August 1942, approximately 700 detainees were working on irrigation-related projects.[52]

Approximately 700 Japanese American detainees were working on the subjugation and irrigation projects in August 1942. Photograph from WRA 1967.014, Group 7, Vol. 1, Sect A, WRA no. A-151. The Bancroft Library, University of California.

Parting of Ways

Dillon Myer believed in total assimilation or immersion of minority groups into European American culture, while Commissioner Collier believed in the "rights of minority people" (particularly American Indians) to preserve and develop their cultures"[53] while living in the dominate culture. The differences in philosophies between Myer (an advocate for "melting pot" theory) and Collier (a cultural pluralist) affected their management and leadership style. On August 11, 1943, Wade Head, Poston Project Director, wrote to Collier and recommended that OIA sever its connection with the WRA. Head felt the OIA was being "forced to put into effect policies" that were "contrary to the best interests" of the detainees and "in conflict with Collier's own policies and principles."

The OIA officially turned over the administration of Poston to the WRA on December 31, 1943. 54 Despite the turnover, several of the OIA staff remained at work in Poston and were involved in implementing the colonization program while dismantling the Poston camps after the war.

Although the OIA did not reach the original goal of subjugating 10,000 acres, most of the combined proposed plans were accomplished. The workforce accomplished the construction of an irrigation system to the southern region of the CRIR. They built a hard-surface highway to Parker, gravel-surfaced roads for the farm area, and built bridges for the irrigation canals. They leveled land for agricultural use, and produced food crops for detainees residing in the center. Most important, they completed the construction of 54 permanent adobe school buildings for the Indian Service.

ORDINANCE NO. 5

On December 18, 1944, the U.S. Supreme Court informed the press that, based on the Endo v. United States decision, Japanese Americans could no longer be detained in the camps and were free to leave after January 2, 1945.[55]

With the anticipated departure of the Japanese American detainees, the OIA could now move forward with the long awaited-colonization program. The Office of Interior and the OIA moved quickly to put in writing the approval needed to activate the colonization program for Poston. An official document, "Ordinance No. 5—Reserving a Portion of the Colorado River Indian Reservation for Colonization," outlined the terms of the colonization. On February 3, 1945, the CRIT Council signed Ordinance No. 5, giving its official approval to allow for the colonization of other southwestern American Indians to Poston.

The ordinance specified the conditions for the colonization of other Indians to the Southern Reserve (Poston). They were to be Indians who lived on tribal land where water resources were inadequate to support "their present Indian population, and returned soldiers of these tribes." The tribes living along the Colorado River tributaries at the time included the Huyalapai, Hopi, Navajo, Apache, Zuni, Papago, Supai, Yuma, Chemehuevi, and Mohave. Other tribes were eligible upon approval by the CRIT Council.

In May 1945, the WRA returned control of 2,000 acres to the OIA for the colonization program.[56] The OIA agents actively recruited American Indians living in the specified areas to consider "relocating to Poston" with promises of land to farm, abundant water, and housing. Camp II was the only camp set aside for the colonization program.

The signing of Ordinance No. 5 was the culmination of the government's long struggle to gain approval from a reluctant CRIT Council to implement its 1940 colonization plans. However, in the early 1950s, the Tribal Council challenged the validity of the ordinance, believing they had been coerced into signing the document under duress. The ordinance remained in force while intense negotiations between the OIA and the CRIT Council continued, and in the mid-1950s, the colonization program was terminated. Until the program officially ended, non-related American Indians from other reservations were recruited to Poston and the CRIR with promises of abundant water and land to farm.

The 1940 utilization program to subjugate and colonize the CRIR raised questions as to who held legal title and ownership of the CRIR. Such issues, the 1940 plan suggested, were to be resolved through the Court of Claims and Congress. The CRIT Council exercised its rights in the early 1950s, and legal title to the reservation was finally settled in 1964 in favor of CRIT.

COLONIZATION OF POSTON CAMP II: SEPTEMBER 1, 1945

The decision to relocate to Poston Camp II was a difficult choice for the first group of Hopi colonists, but the enticement of water and farmland made their decision somewhat easier. Government officials from the OIA held meetings to recruit and encourage the Hopis to relocate to Poston. It took several meetings before a group was ready to move.

The OIA recruiters specifically mentioned the water rights issue and the availability of land for them to farm. The Hopi reservation was relatively arid. They depended on "dry farming," that is, only on rain or snow to provide water for their crops or cattle. At Poston, they were told, there was an abundance of water and land. And the government officials stressed the need for additional farmers to cultivate the southern region of the CRIR. Not all of the recruited colonists were farmers or ranchers; some were government workers. But the government officials seemed to target families who lived outside the Hopi villages, regardless of their occupation.

A small number of Hopi men traveled to Poston in the spring of 1945 to scout the Poston area before making a decision. Estelle Yava, then five years old, remembers her father bringing back "samples of vegetables that he got down at Poston." Her father was so impressed that he encouraged his family to relocate. She recalls him saying, "Let's move and take this offer, because there's lots of water."

The colonization program officially began with the first arrival of Hopi colonists on September 1, 1945. Seventeen Hopi families traveled for two days in a caravan, arriving in Poston on a hot September day. A welcoming committee greeted them and provided lunch at the Valley Indian School just north of Poston.[57] At the time, several hundred Japanese American detainees were still living in the Poston camps. The Japanese American "colonists" (as they were also called) were busy packing and making arrangements to leave Poston.

Japanese American "colonists" were busy packing and leaving Poston while Hopi "colonists" were moving into Camp II. Photograph from WRA 1967.014, Group 26, Vol. 3, Sect A, WRA no. K-377. The Bancroft Library, University of California.

Yava fondly remembered the welcoming committee and the lunch. "They danced for us," she said, recalling the "bird dance" that a lady danced for them. The day was so hot that Yava's ice cream began melting before she could eat it. The Hopi Reservation from whence they came (northeast section of Arizona) didn't have such high temperatures as the Hopi colonists were experiencing that first day.

Maxine Morris, then eight years old, also recalled the hot day and the welcoming committee. Morris said, "They tried to feed us, but everyone was so hot that we just wanted to get where we were going." Their destination was Camp II, several miles further south from the Valley Indian School, where they were welcomed.[58]

As the colonists approached Poston, Yava remembered stopping at the "little white stand" (Army guardhouse) where soldiers were still on duty with their rifles. The sight of the rifles gave her a fright. She remembers thinking, "Oh my goodness. What are they going to do to us?" Until the official closure of Poston on November 28, 1945, when the Army left, the colonists had to show their ID if they traveled outside the camp compounds.

When the Hopi families arrived at Camp II, they were told to "pick out your home" or go "choose any of the barracks." They moved into barracks that had just been vacated by the Japanese American detainees. However, there were 1,024 detainees still living in Poston Camp II.[59] For a brief time, the detainees and the Hopi colonists shared the same public facilities.

Living conditions for the colonists in Poston Camp II were similar to what the Japanese American detainees experienced. They used the public latrines, showers, and the laundry room. However, most colonists did not eat at the mess hall, since each barrack was outfitted with propane gas. The introduction of the public latrines and public showers was traumatizing for the Hopi colonists. Intensely private and reserved in their attitude towards public exposure of their bodies, the colonists found the idea of bathing so publicly to be extremely difficult.

The Yava family moved into a section of a barrack that was still occupied by a Japanese American family. The Japanese American family's name was either "Iwamoto or Yamamoto," recalled Yava. This particular barrack had a detainee family living on one side of the barrack, while a Hopi colonist family lived in the other half. The Yava family even went to eat at the mess hall with the Japanese Americans a couple of times.

The Iwamoto (or Yamamoto) family gave the Yava family "some oblong bowls, some mugs, some cereal bowls, plates, serving bowls, and silver" before they left camp. Yava still uses the items in her home and tells her grandchildren where the items came from. She treasures the bowl "because that's part of my history." She has told her children that she doesn't want them to destroy these personal items after she "leaves this world," as is the Hopi custom. She wants her grandchildren to remember that pe-

Maxine Morris was eight years old when she and her family arrived in Camp II on Sept. 1, 1945. Author photograph.

riod of time. By preserving the bowls, cups, fork, and spoon with "U.S." stamped on it, her grandchildren can say, "Oh, Grandma wasn't lying. She really lived with the Japanese Americans—here's her spoon and here's her fork and here's her bowl."

When the Japanese American detainees left Poston, many left their dishes, furniture, and other items in the barracks. It looked as if they had left in a hurry. The Hopi colonists found the barrack doors open, so they "began to peek in the houses." Many of the colonists made use of the furniture, dishes, and other items they found. But what was especially sad for the Hopi colonists to observe was the way the authorities dug holes, crushed, and buried dishes and other items—items that could have been used by the colonists.

Ron Moore, who relocated with his family in 1949 at the age of 12, said his mother "almost started to cry." She was ready to turn around to go back when she saw their new barrack home. Moore's family had been told that everything would be provided.[60] Because Moore's father worked for the government, they had lived with indoor plumbing and other conveniences before moving to Poston. The Poston move "was a step backward" for them initially.

Maxine Morris recalled there were "just the tar walls and the red paper on the floor and the rafters up on top." Just as the Japanese-American detainees had nothing when they arrived, the Hopis arrived with little but their clothes. They were shocked when they saw their new home.

But for Morris's family, the camp facilities were an improvement from their ranch life on the Hopi reservation. Because her family lived away from the village, conveniences such as running water and electricity were not available. With the help of the children, her mother had walked about a mile to get drinking water for the family. Laundry was done with a washboard, and baths were taken in "big old tubs." Despite the obvious advantages to having running water just outside their barracks, her mother was unhappy when she first arrived.

Morris recalled that her parents made an agreement that they would try Poston out for two years. If her mother was still unhappy after that time, her father agreed to move back to their Hopi reservation, where they still owned a house. During those two years, their camp barrack home was remodeled with wallboard and other improvements. Finally, when the two years were up, her mother said it was "too convenient" in Poston. Morris said, "We had electricity, [and were] still using public facilities, but we had water and a washing machine."

More important to Morris's mother was the school arrangement. Her children were able to attend school in the morning and return home after school, unlike the situation at the Hopi reservation. There, Morris and the other children were sent to boarding school and were gone for months at a time. Her father would travel by horseback to visit his children; Morris would cry and ask to go home with him. So despite the initial shock of Poston, her mother decided to stay, and the family sold their house to a relative.

During the 10 years the colonization program was in effect, many other American Indians from different tribes arrived to live in Poston. Members of the Navajo tribe began to arrive in 1947; other colonists came from the tribes of Walapai, Supai, Cocopah, Quechan, Chemehuevi, and Mohave.

Many of the colonists who initially relocated eventually returned to their former reservation. However, a large number of Hopi and Navajo colonists remained and eventually became members of the Colorado River Indian Tribes. Today, the official seal of CRIT consists of four tribes: Mohave, Chemehuevi, Hopi, and Navajo. As of 1992, the total CRIT membership was 3,032, with 1,783 members living on the reservation and 1,249 members living off the reservation in different part of the United States.[61]

Hopi children swimming in Camp II swimming pool. The Hopi colonists seldom had access to so much water. Photograph courtesy of the Parker Area Historical Society, Parker, Arizona.

POSTON HERITAGE/THE REMAINS OF POSTON

At the end of WWII, the Parker OIA faced the daunting task of dismantling the third largest city in Arizona. Incredible bureaucracy thwarted the OIA as it tried to implement the colonization program while simultaneously disassembling the Poston Camp. Correspondence from 1948 between the Parker OIA and its headquarters in Washington, D.C. indicates that the OIA was still waiting for Congress to pass legislation allowing for the transfer of the WRA barracks, schools, and other improvements over to CRIT. It took three years for Congress to do so.

In the meantime, the Parker OIA—known today as the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA)—struggled to dismantle the Poston Camp and its assets. The Parker OIA was constantly short of funding for clerical help, the upkeep of Poston, and the subjugation and colonization program.

Furthermore, negotiations regarding compensation to CRIT for use of their land had become protracted and complicated. In February 1945, the Office of Interior acknowledged that all permanent buildings and installations of water and sewage systems, streets, and roads belonged to the CRIR and should be left in place. These were to be included in any compensation to the Indians for the use of their lands. However, the portion of the CRIR used for the Poston Camp was classified as "property to be sold." The original fear that the CRIT Council had in 1942 regarding permanent loss of their property to the government almost came true. But in October 1946, the error was discovered, and the land and its improvements were returned to CRIT though the Office of Interior. It then became the responsibility of the Office of Interior and BIA to negotiate the appropriate compensation with the CRIT Council.

Jana Ponce, Library Director at Parker Public Library, lives in one of the original camp barracks. Her home in Parker has been modified and enlarged with rooms added on each side of the barrack. Author photograph.

While some camp barracks were being carefully dismantled to determine how the lumber, nails, and other items could be salvaged to recoup the cost, negotiation was taking place regarding the sale of the barracks to CRIT members. In particular, the CRIT Council wanted the camp barracks for returning American Indian GI veterans who needed housing. After many memos between Parker OIA and its head office, most of the vacant camp barracks became available for anyone to purchase for $50; it wasn't limited to tribal members. Some families pulled their resources together and "split the barracks and hauled them off" to separate properties.[62]

Today, CRIT owns the title to the land in trust through the government. The Tribal Council oversees the complex financial and business transactions of agriculture, tourism, recreation, and light industries. Agriculture continues to be its principal business, such as the tribes' CRIT Farm. There are a few independent farmers, but many lease their farmland to non-Indians. Some Mohave, Chemehuevi, and Hopi farmers, however, continue to farm. Using the irrigation system, the farmers produce cotton, alfalfa, wheat, feed grains, lettuce, and melons.

Left, Camp I elementary school auditorium. Below, the interior of the auditorium with gaping holes in the ceiling and right side of the building. As we were going to press, we learned that a fire had destroyed this building. Author photograph.

The Red Road to Sobriety Center is still using one of the Camp I classroom buildings today. Beautifully painted native murals grace the exterior walls. Author photograph.

There are several barracks still standing on the reservation. Some families who work as farm workers still live in the original barracks. In most cases, the barracks have been remodeled with wood siding and other improvements. Some camp barracks are now so old that the owners are beginning to tear them down. Other barracks have been converted to storage facilities.

The original OIA plans in 1942 called for the relocation of the Phoenix Indian Boarding School to Poston after the closure of the camps; that relocation never happened. But the adobe school buildings in Camp II were used by CRIT and the Parker School District for over 30 years, from 1949 to 1980. The Camp II school complex became Poston Elementary School in 1949, after Congress settled the transfer of WRA property to the OIA. Joseph Le Pera served as principal until his death in 1960. The school was renamed in his honor as Le Pera Elementary School. In the spring of 1980, the Le Pera Elementary School moved into its current facilities, and the Camp II adobe buildings were demolished.

The elementary school in Camp I was also used by CRIT and the Parker School District. The Camp I auditorium was used for different community affairs and sporting events. In the late 1960s, the Job Corp established a program in Camp I to train people from all over the state of Arizona. One specific job they did was to restabilize the adobe school buildings in Camp I. Today, the once beautiful adobe auditorium still stands but is in dire need of restoration. One of the adobe classrooms in Camp I continues to be used today as an alcohol recovery center. "The Red Road to Sobriety" center serves American Indians from other reservations as well as the CRIR. Its exterior wall is beautifully painted with colorful native images. However, the other classrooms are in various stages of neglect and deterioration.

The adobe structures that stand today where Camp I stood in 1945 are a constant reminder of a period of history when the human spirit prevailed, despite the hardship of the surrounding circumstances. Although the Japanese American detainees did not know that they were constructing the buildings for eventual use by the Indian Service, it is nevertheless fitting that these structures of education still stand on the CRIR today. These buildings pay tribute to the community spirit that helped the detainees survive the harsh experiences of WWII and Poston.

POST-WAR RELATIONSHIPS

For the past two decades, many Japanese Americans have returned to Poston to revisit their former desert home. In the process, friendships between CRIT members and the Japanese Americans have blossomed with the different programs and projects they've undertaken together.

The Poston Memorial Monument, built in 1992, is located on Mohave Road, a short distance from Camp I next to the CRIT Fire Station. Photograph courtesy of Ted Kobata.

Poston Homecoming Weekend: "A Celebration in the Desert"

On February 16–17, 1985, after two years of planning, a group of former Poston detainees, their families, and friends returned to Poston at the invitation of the Poston Community Baptist Church. For the returning detainees, the weekend brought back bittersweet memories of Poston. For the Hopi members sponsoring the event, the weekend celebration gave them an opportunity to express their gratitude for the household goods left by the detainees. "It's not like us to take something from someone and not thank them," said Maxine Morris, one of the planners. One Hopi member added, "If it hadn't been for you Japanese people, who figured out how to condition the soil in this valley and how to farm this land successfully, we wouldn't be here today!"[63]

Members of the Poston Community Baptist Church "were just talking" one day, and they wondered if the former detainees would want to come back to "see what it's like." Morris contacted the American Baptist National Headquarters and thus began the inquiry and planning for the memorable homecoming. Annette Anderson (Director of Indian Ministries) and Rev. Kathryn Choy (Director of Asian Ministries) served as liaisons and assisted in the planning of the weekend. Several committees (both Japanese Americans and Hopis) were organized to help with the planning. Members of the Poston Community Baptist Church saved their money and worked hard to prepare meals. In return, the Japanese Americans took up a "love offering" to express their gratitude for the reunion.

As the former detainees left the CRIR, many took small tokens of remembrance, such as pieces of cotton, sticks, or other small items. They exchanged addresses. Men and women were in tears; there were lots of embraces and expressions of joy. Being reunited in Poston—along with the Hopis, who had shared the "camp experience"—was a special cause for celebration. However, one item was noticeably missing at Poston. There were no signs or markers as a reminder that a concentration camp had existed in Poston during WWII. A small group from Sacramento decided to do something about it.

Construction of the Poston Memorial Monument

On a hot summer day in 1992, Ted Kobata, Ron Moore, and Hutch Hutchinson stood at the future site of the Poston Memorial Monument reviewing the blueprints. Ted Kobata, a semi-retired construction contractor from Sacramento, and Ron Moore, a Hopi colonist and CRIT Planning Director, had worked together to create a beautiful monument in remembrance of a time when Japanese Americans shared a home with the CRIT community on their reservation.

In 1991, Kobata traveled to Parker and Poston on several fact-finding missions. For months, Kobata worked with Moore to negotiate and plan the building of the monument. Seven members of the Poston Memorial Monument Committee made a presentation before the CRIT Council to share their plans for the site and to describe the monument.

Ray Takata, an architect, and Stephan Hamamoto, a civil engineer, designed the monument and kiosk. According to Takata, the concrete single column monument symbolizes "Unity of Spirit." Thirty feet high and seven feet wide, the monument has a hexagonal-shaped base that represents a Japanese stone lantern. There are 12 small pillars for a sundial that circle and frame the monument.

Weeks of preparation went into the monument construction. Kobata researched the type of materials needed to execute the design and made a pattern for the mold. For three weeks, volun-

Sacramento volunteers packed and ready to travel to Poston with the monument mold and other essentials necessary for construction of the monument. The caravan left for Poston in August 1992. Photograph courtesy of Ted Kobata.

teers worked at Kobata's shop (behind his home) in Sacramento to build the mold. In August 1992, the equipment, tools, and mold were en route to Poston.

Before the actual monument could be constructed on the designated site near Camp I, the ground needed to be leveled and prepared. With funds contributed from many former detainees, local contractors provided heavy equipment, cranes, and labor to prepare the earth.

The 13-man work crew, in their late fifties to early seventies, worked for nearly three weeks in the blistering desert heat to build the monument. With the dedication service scheduled for October, they worked from 6 a.m. to sunset, in temperatures ranging from 115°F to 120°F. The heat was so intense, the men said, "By the time we drank water at Ted's RV and walked back to work, we were thirsty again."

The planning and management of the monument construction required a great deal of effort and involvement from the committee members and many volunteers. People in Sacramento donated various kinds of foods, which were driven down to Poston. Sus Satow was the designated cook for the monument project. To add the final touches, the Takehara Landscape Company planted 15 palm trees transported from Southern California. They also installed an irrigation system and a water fountain donated by Tom and Toshi Takehara and family. Brian Masunaga (born in Camp I), Brian Takehara, Rick Hobbs, Mike McCoy, and David Arnold worked for nearly four days to complete the landscape and installation.

In 1995, the Sacramento group returned to Poston—with women this time—to build the kiosk. The kiosk, designed by Ray Takata, looks like a large Japanese lantern. As with the larger monument, the kiosk has bronze plates that detail the history of CRIT and Poston. The kiosk also provides a place for visitors to pick up brochures about Poston.

The Sacramento men and women were especially grateful to the CRIT community for their willingness to provide the land, as well as their friendship. The cooperation the Sacramento group received from the CRIT Council and the Parker BIA was beyond their expectation. Not only did they give their time to help in the construction, but they later provided assistance with the dedication service for the monument on October 6, 1992. "They set up everything," said Kobata. "We have nothing but praise for them." Again, for the dedication of the kiosk on November 7, 1995, the CRIT community participated and assisted in the event.

The Poston Memorial Monument is strategically located close

The Sacramento volunteers returned in 1995 to build the kiosk. Photograph courtesy of Ted Kobata.

to the CRIT Fire Department on Mohave Road, a short distance south of Poston Road. The CRIT Fire Department protects the site from vandalism, stocks the kiosk with brochures, and answers questions for visitors who stop in at the fire station. Today, the Poston Memorial Monument Committee is a non-profit organization that manages contributions and funding to maintain the monument and kiosk. However, future generations will need to step forward to ensure that the site is maintained, that the kiosk brochures are updated and printed, and that the relationship with the CRIT community is sustained.

The connections that bind CRIT and the Japanese American detainees together is fittingly inscribed and exhibited on the monument's bronze plates. These two disenfranchised groups of people not only shared a desert home for a brief period of time, but also now share their histories for the public to observe, read, and appreciate.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

My interest in Poston goes back a long way. My early memories of childhood (age six to nine) are of the Poston camp and the surrounding beige desert. Our family was sent first to the Santa Anita Assembly Center on May 1, 1942, where our youngest brother was born. Two weeks after his birth, we went by train to Poston. Our family of six arrived in Poston Camp III on August 28, 1942. After the war, our family left Poston to return to San Diego on September 11, 1945.

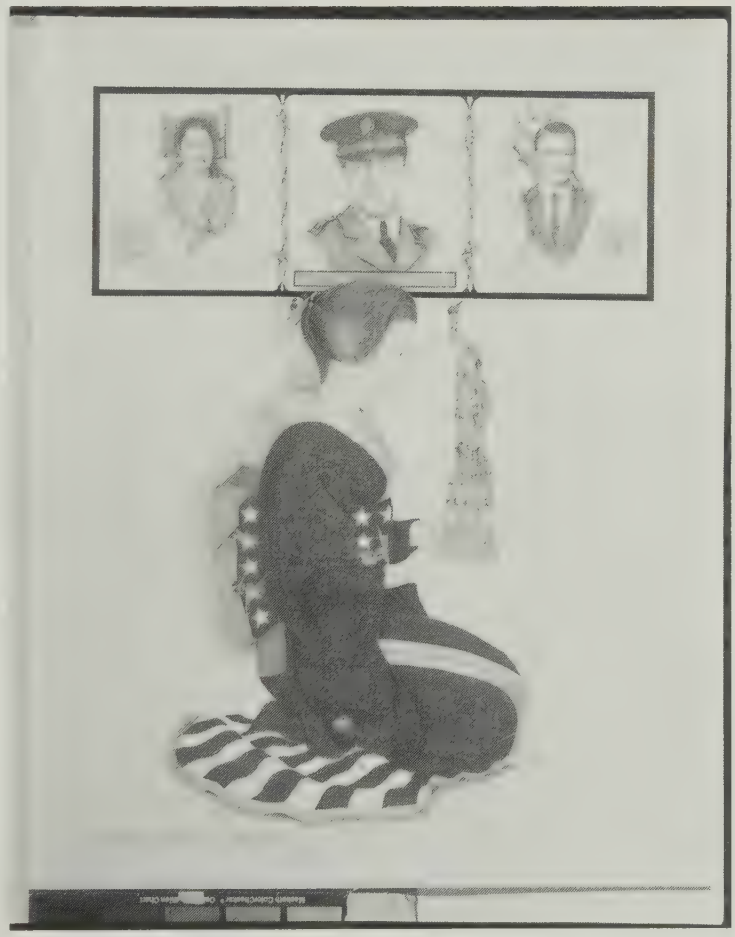
Though the Japanese American detainees and the CRIT people "shared a desert home" for three years, we lived as strangers during those years, each group struggling with their own issues. Except for the high school basketball games and a few stories I've heard from CRIT members of how their parents or relatives traded their chicken for vegetables grown in Poston, there appeared to be little contact between the neighbors. While human contact between the two groups was limited, the creation and establishment of Poston brought permanent changes to the CRIR and its people.

The Poston Camp and the OIA projects not only changed the physical environment of the reservation but the human dimensions as well. The CRIT membership changed as the Hopi and Navajo colonists were officially adopted into the CRIT family of tribes. It was sobering to learn that young CRIT veterans fought in WWII while being denied the right to vote,[64] and returned to their reservation to live in barracks that we vacated. The added realization that the vacated barracks became homes for the incoming colonists and for many CRIT members as well is a somber thought.

The Japanese American detainees and CRIT were pawns on the Poston game board with the hands of government officials moving groups of people about with no regard to the human dimensions of their actions. Uprooting and evicting a group of people because of their race and culture had enormous human consequences.[65] For a brief moment in history (1942—1945), the Japanese American detainees experienced what the American Indians have endured for centuries. The "relocation policy" (or assimilation policy) implemented in Poston was later applied to Indian tribes by the BIA when Dillon Myer became Commissioner of Indian Affairs in 1950, with mixed results. For the American Indians, the relocation policy meant assimilation into European American society at the cost of losing their tribal values, beliefs, and traditions. The consequences of the relocation policy were more severe for the American Indians given their long history of exploitation by the U.S. government and European settlers. Associated with the relocation policy was the hidden agenda of non-American Indian companies and individuals interested in potential riches of the reservations.

I gained respect for Commissioner John Collier, who tried to move the government's relationship with the American Indians onto a different level. John Collier was a controversial man during his tenure as Commissioner of Indian Affairs. His philosophy of respect for American Indian culture and self-determination ran counter to Dillon Myer's belief that minority people needed to give up their cultural heritage to live in the dominate European American society. We know today that one's cultural values, traditions, and belief systems need not be erased or "melted" (an impossibility at best) in order to function in the dominant society. It is not a question of "either / or" but of adaptation and appreciation of differences.

"We hold these truths to be self-evident. . . ," 1998. Drawing by Ruth Okimoto. Subjects adapted from photos. Left to right: Mother, Kirie Okimoto (L); George Mukai, U.S. soldier, family friend (center); Father, Tameichi Okimoto (R); Japanese American woman's face adapted from daughter, Topaz Sano.



In hindsight, Collier's decision to incorporate the establishment of Poston with the 1940 utilization plans for the CRIR was a brilliant organizational move. Poston served as a catalyst to settle important questions raised in the 1940 utilization plan.

The opportunity to go deeper into the history of Poston changed my perception of those years. The revisit reduced the psychological and emotional pain I have carried for decades, and heightened my awareness of how government officials and their particular philosophies can impact groups of people. For the past three decades, I have used art as a way to deal with my camp experiences. Drawing and painting helped unearth deep unconscious feelings about my childhood years in camp and its impact on my adult life. In 1999, I wanted to do a series of art-

work that included the CRIT people and their history. When I inquired about doing research at the CRIT Library, I was told that an application was necessary to get permission from the CRIT Administrative Committee. I applied and was granted permission in October 1999. During the course of doing my CRIT art research, I applied for funding from the California Civil Liberties Public Education Program to expand my research. This publication is the result of an extraordinary journey that combined art and research. Although I was unable to complete as many artworks as I needed and wanted to do, I'm hoping there will be time for that in the days ahead.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ruth Y. Okimoto, Ph.D. Photo by Zand Gee.

Ruth worked as a college administrator, human resource manager, and career counselor for many years before taking early retirement to return to graduate school. She received her B.A. in Administration and Legal Processes (minor in art) from Mills College in 1978, and her Ph.D. in Organizational Psychology from the California School of Professional Psychology in 1998. She also attended art classes at the California College of Arts and Crafts in 1971-73.

APPENDIX A: AMERICA'S CONCENTRATION CAMPS

▲ Assembly Centers
● War Department Internment Camps (Relocation Centers)
■ Justice Department Internment Camps

Manzanar, California
Tule Lake, California
Poston, Arizona
Gila River, Arizona
Minidoka, Idaho
Heart Mountain, Wyoming
Granada (Amache), Colorado
Topaz, Utah
Rowher, Arkansas
Jerome, Arkansas

APPENDIX B: POSTON MEMORIAL MONUMENT

Poston Memorial Monument Committee

Co-Chairs: George S. Oki, Sr., Kei Higashi, Hannah Satow; Treasurers: George Makishima; Secretary: May Takeuchi; Chief of Construction: Ted Kobata

Members:

Masato Asakawa
Osame Doi [A]
Sadako Furiike
Bessie Hamakawa [A]
Vi Hatano
Roy Hayashi
Dan Inouye
Frank & Joanne Iritani
Masami Iwasa [1, 2]
Kern Kono
Ted Kobata [A, 1, 2, 3, 4]
George Makishima
Tom Masamori
Richard Babe Karasawa
Nancy Matsuda
Jim Namba [1, 2, 4]
George [A, 2] and Joan Oki
Nat Ohara [1]
Jim Sakamoto [A]
Hannah Satow [A]
Oscar [2] and Lillian Satow
Mae Shigaki
Jun Sunahara [2, 4]
May Takeuchi
Kiyo Sato Viacrucis [A]
Sue Yamamoto

Volunteers who worked on the project:

Sid [1, 2, 4] and Jean [5] Arase
Jim [1, 2, 3, 4] and Betty [5] Kobata
Larry [4] and Emi [5] Nakashima
George Sato [2]
Sus Satow [1, 2, 3, 4]
Edwin Sunahara [1]
Masayuki Sunahara [1, 2]
Duke Takeuchi [1, 2, 4]
Kay Urakawa [1, 2, 3]
George Yomogida [1, 2, 3]

A. Committee members who presented plans to the Tribal Council
1. Work crew in Sacramento-built the monument mold fabrication at Kobata Construction site, 1992
2. Work crew at monument site, Poston, Arizona
   S. Arase, T. Kobata, Takeuchi, Urakawa, J. Kobata, Namba, Satow, J. Sunahara, and M. Sunahara were the core crew who worked two to three weeks. Ted Kobata worked several months on the project. 1992
3. Work crew in Sacramento to build kiosk mold at Kobata Construction site
4. Work crew in Poston for kiosk; cement pour May 17-25, 1995
5. Cooked meals for kiosk work crew and did other support tasks, May 17-25, 1995[66]

1992 CRIT Tribal Council

Officers:
Daniel Eddy, Jr., Chairman
Russell Welsh, Vice Chairman
James R. Alcaid, Secretary
Eldred Enas, Treasurer

Council Members:
Connor Byestewa, Jr.
Herman D. Laffoon, Jr.
Lawanda E. Laffoon
Dennis R. Patch
Rayford H. Patch

APPENDIX C: EISENHOWER'S LETTER

March 21, 1945
Dear Commissioner Collier:

As determined in our conference yesterday, I am setting forth in this letter the preliminary arrangements we shall adhere to as the Office of Indian Affairs aids the War Relocation Authority in meeting its responsibility for the location and maintenance of 20,000 Japanese on the Colorado River Reservation in Arizona.

1. The Army will construct housing and other facilities on the project and will transport the 20,000 detainees from the military zone to the project. It is my understanding that your Office will immediately prepare a plan for the placement of physical facilities in relation to the work to be done, and that we shall jointly present this plan to the 4th Army Command at San Francisco within the next few days.

2. The War Relocation Authority will formulate a program and policies for Japanese use of the available portion of the Colorado River Reservation and these will be effectuated through the Office of Indian Affairs, under your administrative supervision. In other words, your organization will carry out a program for the Authority.

3. You will draw together, from among the competent personnel of your bureau, a project organization which will supervise, on the ground, the irrigation, health, educational, and all other phases of a well-rounded public work and community project.

4. Since policies will have to be developed as we gain experience and meet varying problems, the Authority will place a representative on the project to cooperate with your project manager. Many policies and plans can be developed cooperatively by these two officials right on the ground; the overall policy and program decisions will be developed by the Authority, with the cooperation of the Office of Indian Affairs.

5. Just how all fiscal, procurement, and related matters will be handled remains to be determined, but as soon as possible your office should develop a short-time budget covering all phases of the work except wages for the Japanese. As you know, the question of wages has not been determined, though our present thought is that wages will not be paid until organized public work gets under way.

6. As soon as feasible, a formal memorandum of understanding between the War Department, the Department of the Interior, and the War Relocation Authority will be prepared. In the meantime this letter, upon your verification of it, will enable you to proceed immediately to build a project organization, prepare plans for land and community development, and prepare estimates which will enable us to obtain an allotment from the President's emergency fund.

Sincerely yours,
M. S. Eisenhower, Director
War Relocation Authority [67]

ENDNOTES

Abbreviations:

NAPR- LNO National Archives Pacific Region, Laguna Niguel Office, Laguna Niguel, CA
UCBL-JAERR University of California, Bancroft Library, Japanese American Evacuation and Resettlement Records

1. The Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary (1996) defines concentration camp as "a guarded compound for the detention or imprisonment of aliens, members of ethnic minorities, political opponents, etc., esp. any of the camps established by the Nazis prior to and during World War II for the confinement and persecution of prisoners." This placid definition of concentration camp belies the horrors of the Nazi concentration camps in Europe. The inhumane treatment of the Jews and other minority groups in Europe during WWII go beyond the simple definition of "a guarded compound, imprisonment, confinement, or persecution." America's concentration camps in no way compare to the Nazi "death camps" in Europe with its gas chambers and other horrific atrocities. The U.S. War Relocation Authority (WRA) camps, on the other hand, were concentration camps, a guarded compound that imprisoned "aliens" and "members of an ethnic minority group." For the Jews and other minority groups in Europe, both definitions of "concentration camps" and "death camps" applied in their situation.
President Roosevelt used the term "concentration camps" for the Japanese as early as 1936; however, attempts were later made to use euphemistic terms such as "relocation camps." Army Colonel Karl R. Bendetsen, in a meeting closed to the public, warned state officials and businessmen not to use such terms as "concentration camp and internment camp" when discussing the Japanese evacuation. "Assembly centers or relocation centers" were terms more palatable for domestic and international public relations. At the same executive session, Milton Eisenhower, Director of the WRA, "stressed the delicacy of the international angles of the evacuation program." Japan had announced through the World's Committee of the YMCA that America's treatment of Japanese resident aliens and American-born Japanese would dictate Japan's treatment of Americans held captive by the Japanese government.
2. The government printing of the 77th Congress, House of Representatives, National Defense Migration Committee's Report refers to the Executive Order 9102 as Executive Order 9106, in error.
3. UCBL-JAERR, Reel 018, Folder C 1.00 - "History of WRA n.d. Administration, "Development of the War Relocation Authority," p. 38.
4. NAPR-LNO, Box #64, RG 75 Records of the BIA, Records of J. W. Shepard, Fiscal Officer of the Colorado River War Relocation Project, WRA: Second Quarterly Report, July 1 to Sept 30, 1942, p. 61.
5. Burton, R. F., Farrell, M. M., Lord, F. B., and Lord, R. W., Confinement and Ethnicity: An Overview of World War II Japanese American Relocation Sites, Western Archeological and Conservation Center, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, Publications in Anthropology 74, 1999, p. 38.
6. UCBL-JAERR, Reel 018, Folder C 1.00 - "History of WRA n.d. Administration, Development of the War Relocation Authority," p. 48.
7. House of Representatives, 77th Cong., 2d Session, Report No. 2124, National Defense Migration, Fourth Interim Report, p. 212.
8. NAPR-LNO, Box #6, "A Program for the Utilization of the Colorado River Indian Reservation," November 15, 1940, p. 2.
9. Warhus, M., Another America: Native American Maps and the History of Our Land, St. Martin's Press, 1997, 161—168.
10. Ibid., p. 167.
11. "Colorado River Indian Tribes" by Amelia Flores, in Native America in the Twentieth Century, Garland Publishing, 1994, pp. 124—127.
12. Dale, E. E., The Indians of the Southwest, University of Oklahoma Press, 1949, p. 56.
13. NAPR-LNO, Box #6, "A Program for the Utilization of the Colorado River Indian Reservation," November 15, 1940, p. 4.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid., p. 17.
16. Ibid., pp. 1—3.
17. The seven states included Colorado, Utah, New Mexico, Wyoming, Nevada, Arizona, and California. NAPR-LNO, Box #7, Water Rights Records, (603) CRIT - The Colorado River Controversy, J. H. Howard, MDW Attorney 09—47.
18. U.S. government officials in the 1940s used the terms "colonists" or "colonization" without, it seems, any thought to the meaning or impact on the CRIT community. For American Indians, the words "colonists" and "colonization" are laden with meanings of deprivation, ethnic genocide, loss of freedom, and loss of land. Although the dictionaries vary in their definition of "colonist" or "colonization," the popular or general meaning ascribed to the word "colonist," for example, is when a group of people arrive to "take over" a territory and dominate the land and its indigenous people.

The U.S. government officials may have used the word "colonist" to mean "an original settler or founder of a colony." Or defined a colony as "a group of people with the same interests or ethnic origin concentrated in a particular area." However, the term sounds strange and inappropriate in its application to the CRIR. It is inappropriate because the geographical area had been occupied for centuries by the Mohave tribe. In addition, the Japanese American detainees were prisoners, not willing colonists eager to settle a new territory.

For the purpose of this article and to be true to the historical government records, I am applying the terms as they were recorded and used. I invite the readers to keep the time period and historical context in mind.
19. The Office of Indian Affairs is a branch of the Office of Interior.
20. The following were in attendance: Lt. Col. Higgins, Major Huntington, Mr. Jobes, Mr. Klien, other Office of Interior administrators, and Robert H. Rupkey from the OIA. NAPR-LNO, Box #44, RG 75 Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, File Rupkey's Final Narrative Report 3-31-45, p. 2.
21. UCBL-JAERR, Reel 018, Folder C 1.00 - "History of WRA n.d.

Administration, Development of the War Relocation Authority," p. 76.
22. Zimmerman letter to Tolan, dated April 11, 1942, p. 209, House of Representatives, 77th Cong. 2d Session, Report No. 2124, National Defense Migration, Fourth Interim Report.
23. UCBL-JAERR, Reel 018, Folder B9.01 - "Milton Silverman, Relocation Centers: Parker n.d. confidential," p. 9—11.
24. Some of the members of the committee included Chairman Leland M. Ford, California; John Costello, California; Martin F. Smith, Washington; Alfred J. Elliott, California; Homer D. Angell, Oregon; Walter Pierce, Oregon; John M. Coffee, Washington; Harry Englebright; and Representatives Gearhar, Sheppard, and Welch. This committee objected to the use of "Parker Indian Reservation" because it was "in the heart of another power and water area. . . ." The committee also objected to Owen Valley being used for Manzanar for the same reason.
25. "Copies and excerpts of correspondence with Congressional Representatives," UCBL-JAERR, Pre-Evacuation Policies, Programs, and Studies, December 7, 1941—March 1942, U.S. Federal Government, Reel 004, Folder A 12.051.
26. Daniels, Roger, The Decision to Relocate the Japanese Americans, Krieger Publishing Company, Reprint Edition, 1986, p. 87.
27. With the incarceration of some Japanese resident aliens from Hawaii, the birth of newborns in the camps, and family members being reunited in camp, the total population of Japanese resident aliens and Japanese Americans imprisoned in America's concentration camps totaled 120,000 in all.
28. "America's Concentration Camps: Remembering the Japanese American Experience" traveling exhibit of the Japanese American National Museum.
29. Poston I Schoolchildren, Through Innocent Eyes: Writings and Art from the Japanese American Internment. Keiro Services Press and the Generations Fund, p. 110.
30. Poston reached a peak population of 17,814 on September 2, 1942, making it the largest camp besides Tule Lake, a "segregation center."
31. "Hot Enough to Melt Iron: The San Diego Nikkei Experience 1942—1946" by Matthew T. Estes and Donald H. Estes, The Journal of San Diego History, Vol. 42, Summer 1996, No. 3., San Diego Historical Society, p. 130.
32. Taped interview with Rev. Lloyd Wake, September 7, 2000.
33. NAPR-LNO, Box #6, Water Rights Records, Final Report - Operations Division, Vol. I, WRA, Colorado River Relocation Center, p. 44.
34. Burton, J. F., Farrell, M. M., Lord, F. B. and Lord, R. W., Confinement and Ethnicity: An Overview of World War II Japanese American Relocation Sites, Western Archeological & Conservation Center, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, p. 43.
35. Ibid, pp. 216—219.
36. NAPR-LNO, Box #461, John Collier's Talk at Poston, June 27, 1942.
37. Bailey, P., City in the Sun: The Japanese Concentration Camp at Poston, Arizona, Westernlore Press, 1971, Sixth Printing June 1978, p. 96.
38. NAPR-LNO, Box #6, Water Rights Records, Final Report - Operations Division, Vol. I, WRA, Colorado River Relocation Center, p. 48.
39. NAPR-LNO, Box #137, Branch of Soil Conservation, General Correspondence from 1936 to 1943, Staff Meeting (Engineering) Minutes, August 25, 1942, p. 2.
40. UCBL-JAERR, Reel 018, C1.00, Administration, WRA - "History of WRA," n.d. p. 112.
41. NAPR-LNO, Box #6, Water Rights Records, Final Report, WRA, Colorado River Relocation Center Vol. I. p. 48
42. NAPR-LNO, Box #6, Water Rights Records, "Program of Plans for the Future," 9-14-44, pp. 29—30.
43. NAPR-LNO, Box #6, Water Rights Records, Final Report - Operations Division, Vol. I.
44. The original album (April 1, 1943) was republished in 1990 as Through Innocent Eyes, published by Keiro Services Press and the Generations Fund.
45. Ibid., Summer 1943.
46. UCBL-JAERR, Reel 018, C1.02, Correspondence to and from Milton Eisenhower, Mar 26—Jun 30, 1942. Letter to the President, June 18, 1942.
47. Drinnon, R., Keeper of Concentration Camps: Dillon S. Myer and American Racism, University of California Press, 1987, p. 280.
48. NAPR-LNO, Box #64, RG 75 Records of the BIA, J. W. Shepard, Fiscal Officer of the Colorado River War Relocation Project, WRA Semi-Annual Report, Jan 1 to Jun 30, 1943, p. 6.
49. Drinnon, R., Keeper of Concentration Camps: Dillon S. Myer and American Racism, University of California Press, 1987, p. 167.
50. Promotion brochure: "Relocating a People." NAPR-LNO, Box #42, Records of R. H. Rupkey, Project Engineer 1938—1945.
51. See writings of Richard Nishimoto; Inside an American Concentration Camp, edited by Lane Ryo Hirabayashi, for details on how the Japanese detainees felt about their work schedule and general working environment in Poston.
52. NAPR-LNO, Box #137, RG 75 Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Branch of Soil Conservation, General Correspondence from 1936 to 1943, Staff Meeting (Engineering) Minutes August 25, 1942, p. 2.
53. Bernstein, A. R., American Indians and World War II: Toward a New Era in Indian Affairs, University of Oklahoma Press, 1991, p. 5.
54. Ibid., p. 280.
55. Irons, P., Justice at War: The Story of the Japanese American Internment Cases, Oxford University Press, 1983, p. 345.
56. Dale, E. E., The Indians of the Southwest, University of Oklahoma Press, 1949, p. 230.
57. Interview with Estelle Yava, September 14, 2000, Parker, Arizona. See also NAPR-LNO, Box #9, Monthly Report to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, September 1945.
58. Interview with Maxine Morris, September 13, 2000, Le Pera School, Poston, Arizona.
59. The Camp populations on September 1 included persons on short-term leave.
60. Interview with Ron Moore, September 12, 2000, Parker, Arizona.
61. "Colorado River Indian Tribes" by Amelia Flores, in Native America in the Twentieth Century, Garland Publishing, 1994, p. 126.
62. Interview with Orlando Laffoon, September 11, 2000, Parker,

Arizona.
63. "Poston Pilgrimage-From internment to reunion" by Ernest S. Ono, Tozai Times, Vol. 1:7, April 1985.
64. The American Indians in Arizona gained their voting rights after WWII in 1947.
65. Although the effort was controversial at the time, the Japanese American Citizen League (JACL) mobilized to demand an apology and restitution from the U.S. government for the injustices and sufferings of the evacuation. With the support and political acumen of Senator Daniel Inouye and Representatives Norman Mineta, Sparks Masunaga, and Robert Matsui, the Civil Liberties Act of 1988 was passed, providing redress of $20,000 for each living detainee. In 1989, President George Bush issued a formal apology from the U.S. government.
66. Information provided by May Takeuchi and Ted Kobata, Poston Memorial Monument Committee Members.
67. Eisenhower letter to Collier dated March 21, 1942, pp. 210—211, House of Representatives, 77th Cong. 2d Session, Report No. 2124, National Defense Migration, Fourth Interim Report.

REFERENCES

"America's Concentration Camps: Remembering the Japanese American Experience," traveling exhibit of the Japanese American National Museum.

Burton, R. F., Farrell, M. M., Lord, F. B., and Lord, R. W., Confine ment and Ethnicity: An Overview of World War II Japanese American Relocation Sites, Western Archeological and Conservation Center, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, Publications in Anthropology 74, 1999.

Colorado River Indian Tribes Public Library/Archive Website: . Tuesday, August 8, 2000.

Constitution, By-Laws and Ordinances of the Colorado River In dian Tribes of the Colorado River Reservation, Arizona and California, published April 1947.

Dale, Edward D., The Indians of the Southwest: A Century of Development under the United States, University of Oklahoma Press, 1949.

Daniels, Roger, The Decision to Relocate the Japanese Americans, Krieger Publishing Company, Reprint Edition, 1986.

Deloria, Vine, Jr. and Lytle, Clifford M., American Indians, American Justice, University of Texas Press, Austin, 1983.

Drinnon, Richard, Keeper of Concentration Camps: Dillon S. Myer and American Racism, University of California Press, 1987.

Estes, Matthew T. and Estes, Donald H., "Hot Enough to Melt Iron: The San Diego Nikkei Experience 1942-1946" in The Journal of San Diego History, Vol. 42, Summer 1996, No. 3, San Diego Historical Society, p. 130.

Flores, Amelia, "Colorado River Indian Tribes" in Native America in the Twentieth Century, Garland Publishing, 1994, pp. 124-127.

Hirabayashi, Lane R., (Ed.), Inside an American Concentration Camp: Japanese American Resistance at Poston, Arizona, writ ings of Richard Nishimoto, University of Arizona Press, 1995.

House of Representatives, 77th Cong., 2d Session, Report No. 2124, National Defense Migration, Fourth Interim Report.

Irons, Peter, Justice at War: The Story of the Japanese American Internment Cases, Oxford University Press, 1983.

Le Pera Elementary School Orientation, "Historical Perspectives."

"Memorandum of Understanding" between the Director of the War Relocation Authority (Milton S. Eisenhower) and the Secretary of Interior (Harold L. Ickes), signed on April 14, 1942.

National Archives Pacific Region, Laguna Niguel Office, Laguna Niguel, California.

Boxes #6, #7, 75-94-55 - Water Rights Records

Box #8, RG 270 - Records of the War Assets Administration, Arizona

Boxes #9, #42, #43, #44, #63, #64, #137, #150, #151, #461, RG 75 - Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs

Ono, Ernest S., "Poston Pilgrimage-From Internment to Reunion" in Tozai Times, Vol.1:7, April 1985.

Stinnett, Robert, Day of Deceit: The Truth About FDR and Pearl Harbor, The Free Press/Simon & Schuster, 2000.

University of California, Bancroft Library, Japanese American Evacuation and Resettlement Records.

Reel 001 - War Relocation Authority, The Control Program, n.d.

Reel 004 -

77th Cong.

Report of Proceedings of Meetings - March 13, 1942 and March 16, 1942

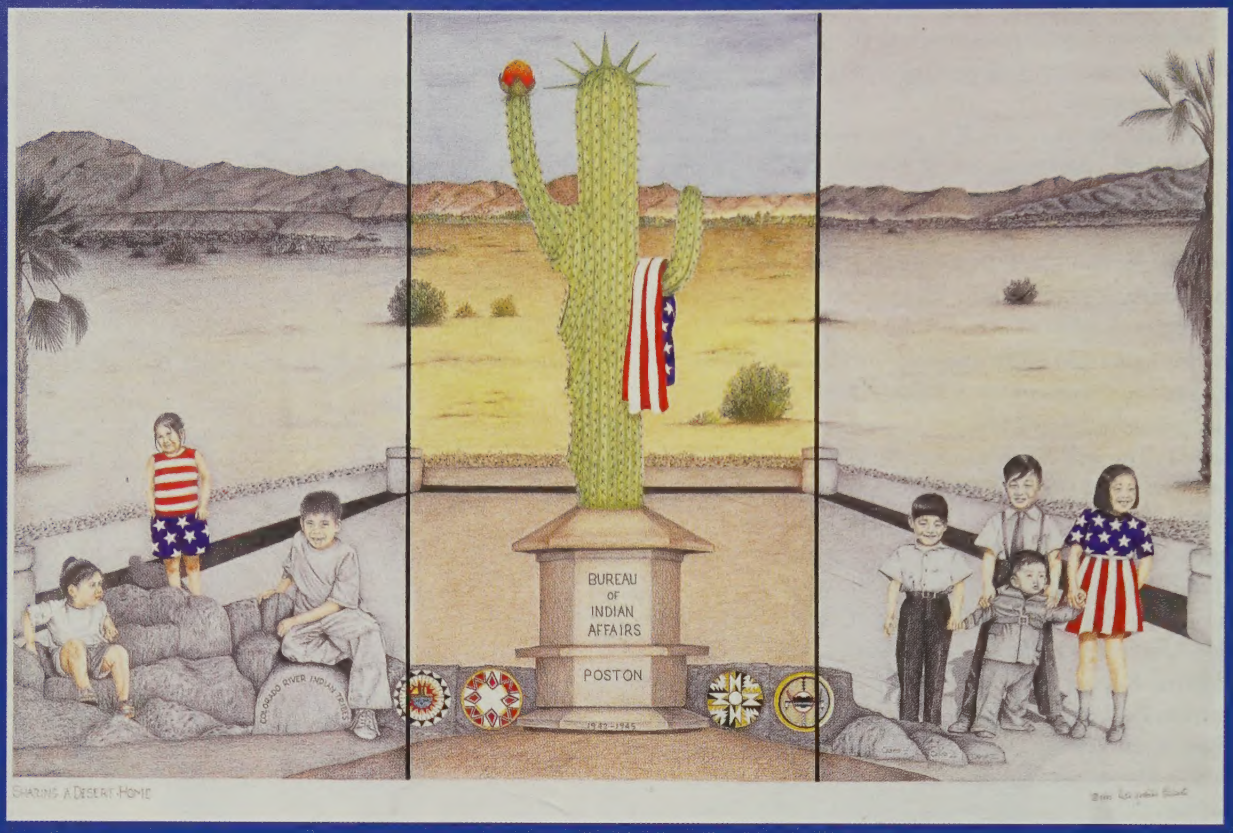
Committee on Alien Enemies and Sabotage

Committee on Evacuation of Japanese from Pacific Coast

Reel 018 - "History of WRA," n.d.

Reel 041 - Weekly information summary, May 30-June 13, 1942

Warhus, Mark, Another America: Native American Maps and the History of Our Lands, St. Martin's Press, 1997.



SHARING A DESERT HOME

News from
NATIVE CALIFORNIA
P.O. Box 9145
Berkeley, CA 94709

NONPROFIT
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Permit No. 25
BERKELEY, CA

Graduate Theological Union
Library - Serials Department
2400 Ridge Road
9814
9821 Berkeley CA 94709-1212

GTU Library
3 2400 00695 6787